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Chestnut Project Poorly Planned, Officials Agree

By CLAIRE MASSIMO

Twelve hours into his new job, Department of Public Works Director Thomas Daley assumed leadership of the Chestnut Street sidewalk project, while residents complained about safety concerns and a lack of communication from the town. Selectman described the project as a work in progress.

About eight neighborhood residents attended the selectmen's meeting.

Daley is due back at the next selectmen's meeting July 20 to report on when he will be able to give a full update on the project to the board. In the meantime, Daley offered to arrange a meeting with Chestnut Street residents to make sure all their concerns were addressed.

"[This project] has been going on a very long time and no concrete answers have been given," said resident Tracy Copp.

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Copp said she had been dealing with the project for nearly five years, and that construction of the sidewalks was nearing the three-year mark.

Other residents complained that their situation has become an embarrassing joke, with other towns people constantly asking them "what is up with Chestnut Street?"

"All we want is for this to be done professionally, timely, and sequentially," Copp said.

Selectman Andre Martecchini agreed that the project had not been completed the way it should have been done, and Town Manager Rocco Longo said that Chestnut Street was a test case that would allow for better planning for any future sidewalk projects.

"This is the first time a sidewalk has been done in Duxbury, and we did it ourselves. We did the best we could with the revenue we had. We are dealing with complications that are beyond our control," Longo said, referring to the transfer of utility company wires to the new poles, which is the responsibility of the individual utilities.

If the town had chosen to design the sidewalk project itself, but then contracted out the work, the cost would have been much higher, approximately \$400,000 - \$500,000, according to Longo and Martecchini.

Some aspects of the project, such as asphalt and curbing, were contracted out anyway, and Longo said that the \$100,000 budget had been exceeded, since paving work was taken out of the town paving budget, and salaries for the workers were paid out of the DPW budget. Longo said he will ask Daley for a full budget analysis of the project when it is completed.

The main delay in the project now, according to town officials, is waiting for NSTAR, Adelphia and Verizon, in that order, to move their wires to new poles. Once all the wires are moved, the old poles, which currently sit alongside the new ones, can be removed. The new poles, however, will remain in their current locations, some of which are right in the middle of the sidewalk.

"We all thought the layout would be different," Longo said.

While Chestnut Street residents were interested in the timetable for the project, they said their main concern was safety. Residents report that the sidewalks are impassable at some pole locations, that mailboxes are placed in unsafe locations so that residents have to go into the street to get their mail, and that construction signs were placed so that children on bicycles were in dan-

ger of riding right into them.

They also complained that water was puddling in front of the burial ground causing erosion even before the street is complete, and that workers were throwing grass seed onto dirt and clay.

"It's throwing good money after bad," Copp said.

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**-Town Manager
Rocco Longo**

Chestnut Street became the test case for Duxbury's sidewalk program in 2000, when it received the highest ranking for sidewalk improvement by the town's ad hoc sidewalk committee.

The committee was appointed by selectmen to recommend a comprehensive plan and policy for the construction of sidewalks with dual goals of increasing citizens' safety while preserving the town's character.

Town Meeting approved \$100,000 for the completion of the Chestnut Street project, and construction began in the spring of 2000. DPW Director Wally Tonaszuck, who designed the project, resigned in November 2001, and acting DPW Director Peter Buttkus took over.

By December 12, 2001 neighbors were complaining about delays and lack of communication with the town.

Chestnut Street residents had a list of specific complaints at this week's meeting, including the unsafe mailboxes, poor grading of driveway entrances, lack of painted crosswalks and failure to put back fences that had been removed at the start of the project.

Selectman and Daley said it was not yet time in the project for these things to be completed.

Improper sequencing of the project is responsible for many of the neighborhood concerns, according to Longo, who said that if the town had waited to pave the sidewalks until the poles were moved, residents wouldn't feel like the project nearing completion with these final details not being addressed.

NSTAR representatives have told selectman that the company will have all its wires moved within a couple of weeks. Verizon has reported that it is ready to go once Adelphia is done, and that its work will take a couple of months.

Town officials involved in the project are concerned about Adelphia, since the company filed for bankruptcy two weeks ago, but Martecchini reported he had talked to someone at Adelphia who said the company was ready to move its wires when NSTAR was done, and that the process would take one or two weeks.